

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) The ~~solution~~ process according to claim ~~1~~ 14, wherein the solvent for coating film formation is a cyclic or linear compound having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure of 140°C or more and ~~containing~~ comprising one or more polar groups selected from the group consisting of a carbonyl group, ester group, ether group, and hydroxyl group.

3. (Currently Amended) The ~~solution according to claim 1 or 2~~ process according to Claim 14, wherein the repeating unit decomposable by the action of an acid and becoming alkali-soluble contains an alicyclic skeleton having 5-20 carbon atoms.

4. (Currently Amended) The ~~solution according to any one of claims 1 to 3,~~ process according to Claim 14, wherein the polar group-containing repeating unit ~~contains~~ comprises at least one polar group selected from the group consisting of a phenolic hydroxyl group, carboxyl group, hydroxyfluoroalkyl group, lactone structure, and hydroxyalkyl group.

5. (Currently Amended) The ~~solution according to any one of claims 1 to 4~~ process according to Claim 14, wherein the amount of the resist polymer in the ~~total~~ resist polymer solution is in a range of 5-50 mass%.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) The process according to Claim 14 ~~any one of claims 6 to 8~~, wherein the rate of dissolution of the resist polymer in the ~~solvent (b)~~ solvent having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure not higher than the boiling point of a solvent for coating-film formation is greater than the rate of dissolution of the resist polymer in the solvent for coating-film formation ~~(a)~~.

10. (Currently Amended) The process according to Claim 14 ~~any one of claims 6 to 9~~, wherein the ~~solvent (b)~~ solvent having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure not higher than the boiling point of a solvent for coating-film formation is acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, tetrahydrofuran, ethylene glycol dimethyl ether, or ethyl acetate.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (New) A process for producing a purified resist polymer solution, comprising:

(1) dissolving a solid product comprising a resist polymer comprising a repeating unit decomposable by, and becoming alkali-soluble by, the action of an acid and a polar group-

containing repeating unit, in a solvent having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure not higher than the boiling point of a solvent for coating-film formation, and

(2) evaporating from the solution obtained in (1) the solvent having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure not higher than the boiling point of the solvent for coating-film formation while adding, under reduced pressure with the temperature being controlled at 70°C or less, a solvent for coating-film formation to produce a purified resist polymer solution,

wherein the amount of impurities having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure of not more than the boiling point of the solvents for coating-film formation is 1 mass% or less of the resist polymer in the purified resist polymer solution.

15. (New) The process according to Claim 14, wherein the solvent for coating-film formation is selected from the group consisting of propylene glycol monomethyl ether acetate, ethyl lactate, cyclohexanone, methyl amyl ketone, diethylene glycol dimethyl ether, diethylene glycol monoethyl ether, γ -butyrolactone, and mixtures thereof.

16. (New) The process according to Claim 14, wherein the solvent having a boiling point at atmospheric pressure not higher than the boiling point of a solvent for coating-film formation comprises one or more of acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, tetrahydrofuran, ethylene glycol dimethyl ether, and ethyl acetate and wherein the solvent for coating-film formation comprises one or more of propylene glycol monomethyl ether acetate, ethyl lactate, cyclohexanone, methyl amyl ketone, diethylene glycol dimethyl ether, diethylene glycol monoethyl ether, and γ -butyrolactone.